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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH ELECTORAL COURT
PRESIDENT ROMERO

REF: LA PAZ 17

Classified By: Amb. Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Ambassador met with Bolivian Electoral Court President Salvador Romero Ballivian on January 5. President Romero sought the meeting to express his concern about attempts by the GOB to co-opt the independent court. President Morales, in a December 22 meeting, suggested that Romero, whose term expires in 2008, "resign now and live his life without complications." Romero is resisting the not-so-subtle pressure for the moment, vowing to finish his term and protect the independence of the Electoral Court. End summary.

BACKGROUND

12. (U) The Bolivian Electoral Court has been an independent institution since 1991. It is charged with organizing elections and maintaining the civil registry of eligible voters. The Electoral Court's decisions are final and cannot be appealed. The court is composed of five judges, each serving a four-year term. Four of the judges are appointed and confirmed by congress with a two-thirds vote, while one judge is appointed by the president. Current Electoral Court President Salvador Romero Ballivian, a non-partisan technocrat, was appointed by congress, and his term expires in 2008. Currently there are two vacancies on the court bench.

MEETING WITH ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT ROMERO

13. (C) President Romero sought the meeting with the Ambassador to express his concern about attempts by the GOB to co-opt the independent court. The court has been under verbal attack by the MAS and President Morales since before the December 2005 presidential election. In his inaugural speech, President Morales said he won the election in spite of the Electoral Court. Although there has been a lull in

attacks since the July 2006 constituent assembly election, Romero says the GOB has recently ratcheted up the pressure. On December 22, Morales met with Romero and asked for his resignation, reportedly telling Romero to "resign now and go live your life without any complications." Romero said President Morales threatened to issue a presidential decree removing him from office. Romero told the Ambassador that he has decided not to resign, as he feels it is his obligation to "try to maintain checks and balances and separation of powers." The Ambassador said he admired Romero's commitment to these principles.

COMMENT

14. (C) Morales' not-so-subtle pressure on the Electoral Court president to resign is consistent with the GOB's recent efforts to recompose the independent judicial and government bodies into more compliant institutions. In this case, the GOB is no doubt doing so in anticipation of a possible referendum later this year over a new constitution. End Comment.
GOLDBERG